



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICES UNIT

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EASU can be reached 24-hours a day, 365 days a year by calling the Duty Station at 508-668-2760.

Check us out on the DOC Intranet by clicking on the EAS icon located under OTHER LINKS.



**“Supporting
the well-being
of our
Correctional
Professionals”**

Back to School and Behavior Changes

Now that your kids are back to school, keep an eye on them to see if you notice any behavior changes. The two main changes children experience when “back to school” comes around are anxiety and sleep deprivation. As a parent, you can help with both of these.

Sleep Deprivation

Sleep deprivation may seem like an easy problem to solve, but with kid’s busy schedules and changing sleeping habits, it can be difficult.

- As a parent, the best thing you can do is to help keep them to a schedule, even on the weekends. They may want to sleep until noon on Sunday, but that will not help them on Sunday night when they can’t fall asleep and end up dragging through the school day on Monday.
- Help your kids to wind down at the end of each day by not allowing them to play video games, work on the computer or watch TV right before bed.
- Make their sleep area a comfortable one without distractions and if they are having trouble falling asleep, put a bedtime routine in place such as reading, listening to music or taking a warm bath.

Anxiety

A new school year often brings about anxiety in children. Usually, it is nothing to worry excessively about, but it is something to address. It could be that they are excited about seeing friends, taking new classes and joining new activities which may appear to you to be anxiety.



- Younger children may often feel separation anxiety. Let them know that the separation is hard but necessary. Focus on all the fun things they will be doing at school. Most kids overcome this fear within a few days.
- Middle and high school age children can often experience social anxiety. If they are afraid to speak up in class and seem withdrawn, this may be a problem. Getting them to talk about their fears may help them get rid of them. Let them know that they are not alone and that it is a normal reaction to an unfamiliar situation. If the social anxiety starts to interfere with their normal everyday activities, you may want to speak to a professional who can offer suggestions on what to do.
- Do not let your kids stretch themselves too thin. It is important that they have some downtime every day where they can relax. If they are involved in too many activities, they may not be enjoying any of them to the fullest. Suggest they choose one or two that most interest them and include non-school related activities as well.

If your child does not settle into a workable school routine after a couple of months, you may want to consult with a pediatrician. In most cases, however, school anxiety is a normal and temporary part of a child’s growth and development.

Resource: Life Advantages via MHNet Behavioral Health (www.mhnet.com)

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

Seasonal affective disorder, or SAD, is a type of depression that occurs at the same time every year. For most people, the symptoms start in the fall and may continue into the winter months, draining your energy and making you feel moody. It's normal to have some days when you feel down. With SAD, you may feel down for days at a time and can't seem to get motivated to do activities you normally enjoy. Take signs and symptoms of seasonal affective disorder seriously. As with other types of depression, SAD can get worse and lead to problems such as suicidal thoughts and behaviors, social withdrawal, school or work problems and / or substance abuse if it goes untreated.

Causes

The specific cause of seasonal affective disorder is unknown. It's likely as with many mental health conditions, that genetics, age and your body's natural chemical makeup all play a role in it. The reduced level of sunlight in the fall and winter may disrupt your body's internal clock, which lets you know when you should sleep or be awake. Also due to the reduced sunlight, a drop in serotonin (brain chemical that affects mood) may play a role. Lastly, the change in season can disrupt the balance of melatonin, which plays a role in sleep patterns and mood.

Symptoms

As previously mentioned, symptoms appear during late fall or early winter and go away during the sunnier days of spring and summer. They may start out mild and become more severe as the season progresses. Common symptoms of SAD include the following: depression, hopelessness, anxiety, loss of energy, social



withdrawal, oversleeping, loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed, appetite changes / cravings for carbs, weight gain and difficulty concentrating. Make an appointment to see your doctor should you notice these types of things happening with you.

Treatment

Treatment for SAD may include light therapy which is a specialized light that you can have in your home. Sitting a few feet from the light therapy box mimics outdoor light and appears to cause a change in the brain chemicals linked to mood. Medications can also be used for treatment of SAD. Antidepressants such as Paxil, Prozac, Zoloft and Effexor are beneficial, especially if the symptoms are severe. Lastly, psychotherapy is another option to try. Psychotherapy can help you identify and change negative thoughts and behaviors that may be making you feel worse as well as teach you ways to cope with SAD and manage stress. Some

lifestyle and home remedies to consider include making your environment sunnier and brighter, getting outside to soak up the sun and exercising regularly.

Prevention

There are no known ways to prevent SAD, but if you take steps early on to manage the symptoms, you may be able to prevent them from getting worse over time. Some people find it helpful to begin treatment before symptoms would normally start in the fall or winter and then continue past the time symptoms would normally go away. If you can get control of the symptoms before they get worse, you may be able to decrease the serious changes in mood, appetite and energy levels.

Resources: Mayo Clinic (MayoClinic.com)

Domestic Violence Awareness

You CAN do Something About Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a pattern of many behaviors directed at achieving and maintaining power and control over an intimate partner, such as physical violence, emotional abuse, isolation of the victim, economic abuse, intimidation, and coercion and threats.

If someone is abusing you or someone in your household, you do not have to accept it—even if your spouse is the abuser. The police and courts can help you stop the abuse.

Domestic violence is against the law...it is a crime in all states, though each state's laws are a little different.

Where You Can Get Help in an Emergency

In a crisis situation, call 911 or the police.

Domestic Violence SafeLink

1-877-785-2020

1-877-521-2601 (TTY)

National Domestic Violence Hotline

24-hours for confidential crisis

intervention, information and referrals

1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

1-800-799-3224 (TTY)

National Sexual Assault Hotline

1-800-656-HOPE (4673)